

# Birchanger

March 2011



# Magazine

Issue 99

## RED TAPE STRIKES AGAIN

### Decision needed at Annual Parish Meeting

Some of you may have wondered just why a series of stakes was driven through the allotments in January. These stakes mark the line of the official footpath which we are told used to go straight through the allotments according to the Definitive Map which sets all the paths out as they are deemed to be. Nobody in Birchanger now can remember anything other than walking round the allotments. Essex County Council must have thought that was the right way as they have even finger posted and way marked the route around the outside. Most walkers feel they are intruding if they walk through and have too much respect for the allotment holders.

Now Essex County Council in the form of a Mr Eley have decided this will not do and that the footpath must be reinstated to its old route in accordance with the definitive footpath map. This will greatly inconvenience the individual allotment holders whose plots lie across the route of the old path and the boundary of the allotments will need to be moved to accommodate the reinstatement. Alternatively we shall have to spend £3000 on changing the line of the footpath.

The astronomical cost is incurred by the lengthy procedures involved which include advertising the changes and bringing the matter to the various bodies concerned for consultation.

Costs will be incurred either way but it will cost considerably more to move the footpath. However there are also security issues as the vandalism occurred mostly when the path went through the middle of the allotments.

What do you think? The matter will be discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting and a vote taken. Your views are important and you need to be there to vote. Essex County Council representatives have also been invited to attend.

I am not sure what has happened to common sense these days.



The footpath as it is now



# PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

*Elizabeth Godwin*

## An important date for your diary

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held at the Church Hall on Wednesday March 30<sup>th</sup> at 8pm. The meeting is an opportunity for people to meet, discuss issues with members of the Parish Council and to talk about any matter relevant to Birchanger today. It is also a good opportunity to meet your neighbours and perhaps to discover some of the things which are happening in the village which might interest you. Refreshments will be served after the meeting which will be another opportunity for people to discuss issues on a more informal basis. The Parish Council is looking forward to seeing you.

## A tough Year ahead

This is the year when financial cuts will really start to bite. The District Council Tax remains at the same rate as last year but other taxes have increased, VAT is up and Council house rents have risen 6.75% in line with government expectations. This represents an average increase of £5.23 per week and is part of the government's plan to bridge the gap between the rents of council houses and the Housing Associations Affordable Housing schemes.

Across the District Council economies have been made in all departments. No redundancies are planned and operations have been streamlined across the council. This has resulted in significant economies but despite this it is expected that the council will be drawing on its reserves in the coming financial year and is not expected to maintain its debt free status for capital projects in future years.

Uttlesford is one of the worst hit councils as it is a small rural District Council and it is these councils who are suffering the most. In effect the council's grants have been cut by about 28% in the next two years. The council cannot set a negative budget, so expenditure has been trimmed to the bone. There are few if any redundancies expected as staff will retrain, or offered other positions as they arise to avoid this wherever possible.

It is hoped that the public will remain unaffected by this, although the little used super loos will eventually disappear, the septic tank emptying service which runs at a loss will be axed altogether and more services may be taken over by Town and the larger Parish Councils should they wish to do so.

## Highways re-invent themselves again

Well what we would really like them to do is fix our potholes before we need to get somebody to fix our cars! That may be a wish too far it seems. Even our relatively recently resurfaced lane needs work and as for some of the side roads!!

It seems that while Essex County Highways are aware their roads are in dire straits they prefer to focus on customer service. In an ideal world this would lead to roads being fixed faster, but don't hold your breath. What it means to us is that we have a new phone number to call when we spot a problem from next month. We actually have a dedicated Customer Liaison Team headed up in our District by Chris Stonham.

However Essex County Council would prefer you not to use that number unless you have to. They would rather you used the dedicated website at [essex.gov.uk/Travel-Highways/Report-a-highway-problem/Pages/Report-a-problem.aspx](http://essex.gov.uk/Travel-Highways/Report-a-highway-problem/Pages/Report-a-problem.aspx)

After typing out that lot I can confirm that the simple old fashioned telephone will be a lot quicker, or will it? I probably have to go through the automated switchboard and identify myself five times. Are they afraid of getting an ear bashing?

## Back in time

For those of us affected by the road closure last month there was the rare experience of a safer quieter Birchanger Lane. Speeding motorists were down, as was the noise and it was actually a pleasure to walk in the lane again. Ok the route round was tedious to say the least, but we did experience what the lane was like years ago.

The downside is that the lane which it took 14 years to have resurfaced, has been dug up. We all know what that means, pot holes and tarmac erosion. I suppose we had better start the lobbying for the next resurfacing now!

## They still block the lane

Despite all pleas the development at Churton continues to obstruct motorists and residents alike. If you are blocked and find you cannot get reasonable action, call the local police at the time of the incident on 07801 461666 and ask for their help. Do not take the matter into your own hands.

## Reduction in airport noise

Airport noise levels fell by some 17% for Birchanger in the year 2009. This was due an 11% reduction in movements of the most commonly used Class 3 aircraft. This group includes Boeing series 737/800, Boeing 575 series and Airbus 320/21 which are commonly used by the main carriers and for charter flights.

In effect this means that most areas of Birchanger are outside the 57 dBA contour, with the exception of houses at Duck End. The figures for 2010 are expected to show a further decrease.

This is due to the economic downturn and noise levels will not remain at this level indefinitely. The noise contour area will increase as the economic situation improves, despite the generally quieter aircraft using Stansted. The population affected by the 57 dBA contour equates to the population affected in 1992. Enjoy it while it lasts.

However it is not the quieter aircraft which wake us in the middle of the night. It is the big freighter which rattles our homes which causes the most disturbance now.

## What to do if you believe someone is acting suspiciously.

Yes the burglars are still about and seem to be very bold as they go about their incredibly selfish business. You do not have to be a supergran to stop a crime and to catch a thief. If you simply try to take a note of the car registration number or even just part of it, the colour and possibly the make of the vehicle you will be giving the police a head start when you spot someone acting suspiciously. Try to remember something distinctive about them, such as their height and any clothing colour. With the help of everyone we can beat them.

## Community grants on offer again

Every year Uttlesford invites applications from local groups for funding for that special piece of equipment or some facility which they need to improve the service the groups offer to the public. It is well worth applying for these grants as in the past they have helped the Recreation Ground, village Hall and many other groups in Birchanger which operate to benefit the community at large. Everyone applying must be a properly constituted organisation which operates for the benefit of sections of the public.

If you would like an application form or would like to find out more about the offer please call me on 812793 or contact Sue Hayden at the Council Offices on 01799 510510. The closing date for applications is May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Grants range from £100 to £3500 and the project must be started after April 1<sup>st</sup> and completed by March 7<sup>th</sup> 2012.

## Time to be counted again!

You may have already got the forms but if not they will be with you very soon, for the ten yearly census which will take place on Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup>.

This form may seem to be very intrusive and some of the sections are optional. The real point to the form is that it helps to forecast the needs of our district in the next ten years and as such helps local authorities to plan accordingly.

A nuisance yes, a long term benefit, well that's the plan.

## Do you really need to go to A and E?

Or Accident and Emergency in real writing! It is very often the case that A and E is not the best place to sort out your health problems, and with waiting times at A and E units certainly set to rise, the chances are that for certain ailments you would be better off going elsewhere.

First, start with a well stocked medicine cupboard, which includes such things as basic pain killers, diarrhea medicine, rehydration mixture, indigestion remedies, plasters and a thermometer.

Next remember that NHS Direct have a round the clock telephone advice and information service. The number is 08454647 or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Use your Local Pharmacy. They have over the counter remedies for coughs, colds and headaches.

See your GP for earache, vomiting and stomach pains.

Use the Minor Injuries Unit at Herts and Essex Hospital. It might save a trip to Harlow.

Instead of the Casualty Units use the Walk in health Service opposite Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow.

## Sorry dog owners I am complaining again

Fortunately this does not apply to the great bulk of dog owners, but there has been a large amount of dog mess presumably produced by a very greedy small dog or one of the larger varieties, deposited all too regularly on our footpaths and bridle ways. Right in the middle of the path as well! I am not in the business of name and shame but I am told that one of the culprits is a large brown dog who takes a couple out when he goes for his footpath ablutions.

I know it is not nice to come home with a bag of poo but this is a responsibility everyone takes on when they become a dog owner. Nobody wants a dog bin outside their houses, the council will no longer provide them in these cash strapped times, so I am afraid dog owners, the responsibility is yours. The dog warden is aware that there is a problem and will take action if you don't.

## And yet another way to get fit

You might be forgiven for thinking that this fitness thing has gone a bit far, or on the other hand you may be looking for a slightly more gentle form of exercise than all the fun runs currently on offer. As a warm up for the Olympics the District Council is to organise a series of five walks across the district starting with a five mile walk around Saffron Walden.

Walkers will be limited to 100 so places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. If you participate you will be rewarded with a badge the aim being to collect all five in the next few months.

# Where have all our verges gone?

This winter has certainly taken its toll of our roads. I seem to have lost at least 6 inches of garden. Others have massive ruts where the bus has met a lorry and there is simply no room for the two of them.

The winter has been bad but various building works in the village have compounded the problem and are the cause of a great deal of the damage. Wouldn't it be nice if those responsible realized this and tried to repair some of the damage they helped to cause?

We repeatedly ask for smaller buses, but it seems that narrower ones which incorporate the necessary facilities for the elderly and buggies do not exist. We are not alone, every other village with a bus service has the same plea, but nobody seems able to listen.



Ruts anybody?

## Clare's Trek part one

Friday 19th November 2010

Well after a day that started with the normal school run and knowing I wouldn't see the children again for 10 days, I now find myself halfway through my flight to Marrakesh, How do I feel? If I'm honest, sick! But why? Well, I think it's a mix of nerves and not knowing what's waiting for us at the end of the flight.

Well what was waiting was complete madness, the bus ride to the hotel where we were to stay tonight was quite an experience, out here they drive like lunatics, there are no road markings it's just a free for all with no rules at all.

It's early evening now and Marrakesh is very hustly and bustly with people everywhere, at the hotel I met Emma who was joining us on our walk, luckily she had already been here for five days, so she knew where to go and what to do, also she could speak French which was great because I only have English and I don't think I would have dared to leave the hotel room without her as it is so very different here to anything I have ever known.

As we ventured out for a look around what I saw just about sums up the way of life here, a whole family out on a small moped, Dad driving, Mum on the back with baby strapped to her back and a small child sitting in front of Dad, with bags hanging off the handle bars, no helmets or anything. Imagine that happening in England, how many points on the licence would that be?

Saturday 20th November

Oh my God! What a day, we left the hotel at 9am this morning to travel to Ozutese, but we had to sit in the van at the airport waiting for three hours because two people who should have been with our party had still not arrived. This really p....d me off as I just wanted to get started and sitting in a van sweating in the heat was not what I'd signed up for.

Once we got going it was a really good day, we drove for about five hours through the Atlas mountains, amazing views at times although very barren, also some very scary moments as the roads are really just like tracks and very narrow and close to the edge at times, especially as they drive as if they have all the space of a motorway, it doesn't seem to faze them at all. We arrived at Ozutese in time for a lovely evening meal and to meet our tour guide Jimmy, who will be with us for the rest of the time that we are doing this trek. This seems a much calmer and friendlier place than Marrakech, I feel much safer here, spent most of the evening talking and wondering what tomorrow will bring.

Clare Pearse



# School News

## Birchanger School has a five star kitchen

As many of you now know, all eating establishments in Uttlesford are subject to a star rating for hygiene following an unannounced inspection of the kitchens. School kitchens are included in the inspections and Birchanger achieved the coveted Five Stars, which is an unusual rating for a school. Clean kitchens don't just happen and are usually the result of exceptionally thorough cleaning over a long period of time. Congratulations to school chef Mrs Quadri for all her hard work in achieving this rating, something which even top restaurants fail to achieve. Have a look at the rating next time you eat out in Uttlesford. Hygiene ratings must now be displayed. They might surprise you. Last month Mrs Quadri cooked two special lunches for the children. The first was a Chinese meal to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The next one was for Valentine's Day. These special lunches are something Mrs Quadri likes to do and happily for everyone, are regular occurrences. Costs for lunches have to rise from next term to £2 per meal. Despite the rise the lunches at Birchanger School are the lowest in the area. Costs of Breakfast Club are to rise as well. The children enjoy them so much that more food is used these days and sadly it all costs money

## Porch enclosure brings a warmer welcome

Over the past few weeks work has been continuing at the school to enclose the porch entrance to the school. This means that visitors to the school have a warmer place to wait in while they are accessing the school or simply making enquiries. The notice boards give details of school menus and forthcoming events and there is plenty of room for a buggy. Office staff are finding the school is a much warmer place now that the main door does not open directly onto the outside.

## Board games wanted

It is Spring at last and many people are turning out their cupboards and finding new homes for unused items. If these include Board Games, complete and in good condition, the school would very much appreciate them for their Board Games Club. They can be dropped into

Refuse Collection Changes for April/ May

Due to Easter, the Royal wedding  
and May Bank Holiday

Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup> non food waste only.  
Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup> Food Waste and Dry Recyclables.  
Following Week normal Collections.

the school during school hours, or by arrangement on 812362.

## More help needed.

There has been a good response to the request for volunteers to come into school to listen to the children read, and we are very grateful to all the volunteers as they really do make a difference. However the school likes to keep the children in small groups and more volunteers are needed. It really is an interesting and worthwhile use of your time and it is appreciated by staff and pupils alike. The school will brief you on what you will be required to do. To find out more please call the school on 812362.

## Titanic created in Birchanger

The Squirrels, formerly known as Class 2 have become very involved in studying the Titanic and the events which caused her to sink with the enormous loss of life as well as the dramatic rescues. They studied the details, painted pictures of the ship and made a large life like model of the Titanic in all her glory using mod rock and chicken wire. The model was painted in the correct colours and was unveiled to parents with great pride at the Friday Sharing Assembly. It really was an impressive achievement. The children became so involved with the project that they are very keen to visit the Titanic Exhibition at O2. The only thing stopping them is the high cost, £20 per child and the money is simply not around these days.

## Open art gallery in the woods

On St George's Day April 23rd, between 10 am and noon Birchanger School children will be exhibiting their art work along the new path which winds from the Water Tower to the back of Focus. A very novel art exhibition and one which must not be missed. See below for more details.

I am conducting an open gallery space in Birchanger wood on Saturday April 23 from 10.00 am until 12.00 mid day. I have spoken with Heather Colpen and Judy Manning from the local primary school who made the suggestion you maybe able to include it in the magazine to highlight the event? We will be exhibiting the art work from two local schools Summercroft Primary and Birchanger village primary school.

Teresa Geraghty

## THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER IS COMING AND HELP IS AT HAND

For older and disabled viewers who may find making the switch difficult, the Switchover Help Scheme is at hand to provide practical help and assistance to turn one TV set to digital.

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard option of help. This includes easy to use equipment to switch one TV, an approved installer, aerial upgrade if needed and a 12 month aftercare service, including a free helpline.

The service is also free for people who are eligible and who also receive pension credit income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-related employment and support allowance.

We can help you convert your TV to digital if you:

- Are aged 75 or over, or
- Have lived in a care home for six months or more, or
- Get (or could get)
  - o Disability Living Allowance (DLA), or
  - o Attendance or Constant Attendance Allowance, or
  - o Mobility Supplement, or
- Are registered blind or partially sighted

If you are eligible, the Help Scheme will write to you directly and in plenty of time to ask if you want our help. All you need to do is respond to our letter by sending back a completed reply form or to make things even easier you can call the Help Scheme free to respond. The Switchover Help Scheme has already helped hundreds of thousands of people make the switch to digital.

Run by the BBC through an agreement with the Government, the Help Scheme has been designed around the needs of older and disabled people. Equipment has been chosen to be easy to use, and contact centre, delivery staff and installers have all been trained to understand and respect older and disabled people. All installers are vetted, carry identification and will never call without having made an appointment.

Eligible people in our local area have been identified and should have received a letter to explain the switchover programme, and the people must respond to get help. There will be 2 further reminders. Many of the eligible people will be fortunate to have relatives, friends or neighbours to assist them with their response. However, some are not so fortunate, and the concern is that these people are amongst those least likely to understand the process.

To ensure that they do not get omitted, a community support programme has been established to reach these people. The support team consists of a number of volunteers, each covering a number of villages in their locality, and it is the objective of these volunteers to get the message across to the eligible people by engaging with organisations and services that are most likely to interface with them, such as Parish Councils, GP's, Pharmacists, Libraries, Day Centres and Community Transport.

If you feel that you know of people that are most in need and who may not be aware of the switch over or where to go to get help, then please contact:

Ken Wheatley – designated support volunteer for Birchanger

Telephone: 07817 585174

mailto:ken.wheatley@vaessex.org.uk

For further information on the Switchover Help Scheme visit [helpscheme.co.uk](http://helpscheme.co.uk) or call 0800 40 85 900. Textphone users can call 0800 40 85 936.

**helping you go digital** 



### The Friends of St Mary's Birchanger

The position of Secretary became vacant at the AGM which was held last December. This position does not require a lot of work. Anyone who is interested and would like to know more please contact Elaine Wright on 01279 813474

## Overflowing Bins in Birchwood.

In the last few months there have been big strains put on the bottle banks and recycling bins at the entrance to Birchwood.

The bottle banks have not been emptied so frequently due to problems with the collection vehicles. The recycling bin is a mystery. Nobody in Birchanger should need to use this bin at all. If you have not got a green bin you can arrange to get one by calling the District council on 01799 510510.

So who uses this bin? Maybe people from outside the area. Do we really need to have it at all? It causes an unsightly mess when people just leave carrier bags by the side of the bin and the contents of the bags become strewn around. The council has had to arrange litter picks to try to combat the problem.

I know it is a pain, but please take your litter home with you if any of the recycling bins are full. Those who live in Birchwood would really appreciate this.

## Planning a Holiday?

After the ups and downs of the winter and the uncertainties of our summer weather, many people may be planning to return to an overseas holiday this year. If they are they may find that the security arrangements for liquids are strickter.

No longer is it enough to simply put less than 100ml pots of cosmetics in your transparent bag. The bag still has to be sealable so non airtight zip bags won't do at all! This is something that many people are discovering to their horror as they arrive at the airport security gates, having checked in their hold baggage. All that has changed is that BAA no longer supply the correct bags for free. But they can be purchased 4 for £1 from machines in the check in zone.

So in addition to all the other security hassles it is little wonder that our skies have seen a lot fewer planes this winter. Maybe that overseas holiday idea is starting to seem not quite as attractive as it once was.

### ANNUAL EASTER LUNCH

Sunday April 10th

In the Church Hall

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birchangerbuddies@gmail.com

## Missing Dog

Can you help find Oscar?

A small sandy and black male (complete)  
Border Terrier cross, 18 months old.

Oscar went missing on 8th Jan, last reported sighting - Picked up on the hard shoulder of the M11 southbound between J8-J7 on 10th Jan at approx 11.10am between the Hallingbury and Sheering bridges by two ladies in a small hatchback car. The police were in attendance in a transit type van. The date of this incident may not be accurate. We need your help to track down these two ladies or the police officers involved. The highways agency have been very helpful but are unable to trace the incident.

If you have any information however small or saw this incident then please call on 01279 439727 or 07773 709908.



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## Village Diary March/April

### March

26th 8.00 pm At the club  
Andy Locksley

27th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Holy Communion

### April

3rd 11.00 am St Mary's  
Matins

9th 8.00 pm At the club  
Chris Keen

10th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Holy Communion

17th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Family Service

22nd 14.00 pm St Mary's  
Good Friday vigil

23rd 8.00 pm At the club  
Bernie Cockney Night  
St George's day

24th 11.00 am St Mary's  
Holy Communion

30th 8.00 pm At the club  
Hit and Run

Royal Wedding night

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